

Submission

to

Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education
Legislation Committee

Inquiry into the Workplace Relations Amendment (WorkChoices) Bill 2005

Submission no: 202

Received: 18/11/2005

Submitter: Dr Peter Jensen

Organisation: Anglican Church, Diocese of Sydney

Address: C/- 1 King Street
NEWTOWN NSW 2042

Phone: 02 9565 5318

Fax: 02 9577 9922

Email: Tracy.gordon@moore.edu.au

The Social Issues Executive of the Anglican Church, Sydney Diocese, welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education Legislation Committee Inquiry into the Workplace Relations Amendment (Work Choices) Bill 2005.



The matter of proposed changes to workplace relations in Australia cannot be taken lightly, as all members of the community, both individuals and families are affected by such change. Fair and balanced industrial relations laws not only rely upon, but indeed create good community relations - fairness in balancing the interests of both employers and employees, and balance in ensuring in particular that employees are able to maintain a healthy home life. Relationships are the primary goal for all in our community. When profit becomes the primary goal, all relationships will suffer.

We wish to highlight to the Committee two principles which we believe must be at the forefront of any changes to current workplace relations:

- 1. proposals that impact on shared and community time, and;**
- 2. proposals that appear to shift undue power to employers.**

Sundays and public holidays are an important time in the life of the nation for families and communities to gather together. The erosion of Sunday as a day of rest and a day for the worship of God is a matter of concern for Christians. The need for a day of leisure and rest, and for time to spend in family and community activities must always be a priority for our nation. While some people already work on these days, the principle of requiring employers to pay a premium to remove workers from important family and community times is important.

A second area of concern is that vulnerable workers, or those who have less bargaining power, need to be protected from the effects of any reforms. For example, the unequal bargaining position of some workers and the inexperience of new entrants to the workforce means that some potentially could be taken advantage of. Traditionally, unions and the Australian Industrial Relations Commission have played an important role in our community in protecting such workers. We would wish to see such protection continue to ensure that employers' power is not increased at the expense of those with less bargaining power.

In summary, we believe that the needs of the economy should remain second to the needs and working conditions of employees and their families. Economic prosperity should not come at a high price to relationships. We would strongly encourage the Committee and the Government to consider carefully the effects of the proposed new legislation on relationships, families and communities.

Kindest regards,

Tracy Gordon
on behalf of the
Social Issues Executive, Anglican Church, Diocese of Sydney